

Minutes of Meeting of Board of Governors of Westminster Foundation for Democracy, on 25 June 2025*Meeting IN-PERSON (PORTCULLIS HOUSE): 9:30-11.30am.*

Present: Yasmin Qureshi MP (Chair)
Milica Delevic (Vice Chair)
The Rt Hon Wendy Morton MP (Vice Chair)
Tom Morrison MP
Liz Saville Roberts MP
James Deane
Duncan Hames
Iain Wright
Anthony Smith (ex-officio, CEO)
Natasha Kurzeja (ex-officio, Chief Operating Officer)

In attendance: Shannon O'Connell (Director of Policy & Programmes)
Charlotte Egan (Head of Global Thematic Programmes)
Christopher Levick (Regional Director, ECA)
Clare Scott (Board Secretary)

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Yasmin Qureshi, welcomed the Board members to the meeting.

It was noted that there were apologies for absence given by Sir Alec Shelbrooke MP and Alice Macdonald MP.

The meeting was quorate.

Declarations of interest

None were raised.

Minutes and matters arising

The Board approved the minutes of the February Board meeting.

Actions from 26 February 2025 meeting

Action point 1 - Revised 2025/26 budget to be shared with the ARC and Board for comments and approval. **Complete**

Action point 2 - PPO annual plans to be shared with the Board. Complete, shared with Board papers.

Chair's opening comments

The Chair, Yasmin Qureshi MP opened the meeting by welcoming the Tom Morrison MP to his first Board meeting. The Chair outlined the meeting agenda and advised the Board that the key issues to be covered in the meeting were approving delegation of authority to the CEO and ARC Chair to sign the Annual report and accounts and the update on the second phase of the spending review.

1. Quarterly Progress Report

Quarterly Progress Reports

For information for the new Board members, the Board was informed that Quarterly progress report is split into an overview report and an in-depth report to make reading and interaction easier for Board members with an update on the overview report provided in the meeting.

The CEO informed the Board that the CEO's update in the overview report (Doc_2a) focuses on phase 2 of the Spending review. Currently we are waiting for the internal FCDO process to complete which determines their funding allocations, including WFDs GIA. Meetings have been held with FCDO officials and Ministers to promote the work and impact of WFD to try and secure the best possible outcome.

The Board discussed the spending review, phase two and what other avenues of funding could be sought and how the Board could use their current relationships to promote and increase WFDs prominence.

The Chief Operating Officer presented the corporate risk register and commentary paper (Doc_3a and b) to the Board and gave an overview of the current strategic risks being monitored. The Board were informed that the three top risk still remained the same as Risk 1: Short- or long-term funding, Risk 7: Inadequate or insecure systems and Risk 9: Constraints on Market Competitive Remuneration; it was noted that the rating for Risk 10 - Loss or Distraction of Critical Staffing Capability had increased to reflect the position the vast majority of teams and programmes find themselves in

The risk register and commentary paper were taken as read with no issues or areas of concern highlighted by the Board.

2. Report of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The ARC Chair informed the Board that the committee had meet in June and focussed its time and attention on:

- The annual report and accounts (ARA) for 2024-25 - It was noted that WFD's position is improved from last year with the financial statements audit complete and the ARA due to be laid before parliament in July. Due to this the Board was asked to approve delegation of authority to the ARC for approval of the Annual report and accounts, with authority provided to Iain Wright and Anthony Smith to sign the Annual report and accounts on behalf of the Board.
- Internal Audit – The ARC received an update from the FCDO internal audit team who after a gap in service following the dismissal of the previous audit team have taken on this function. An audit charter and an initial audit on Risk Management were approved by the ARC.
- Reserves – The ARC were informed that the current reserves for WFD are much higher than the level agreed at the February meeting which places WFD in a good position going forward during a time that there is uncertainty around future funding levels.

The Board discussed the update from the ARC chair. The Board agreed to delegate authority to Iain Wright, ARC Chair and Anthony Smith, WFD CEO to approve and sign the annual report and accounts on behalf of the Board.

DECISION - The Board approved the delegation of authority to the ARC to approve, and Iain Wright and Anthony Smith to sign, the Annual report and accounts once finalised.

3. Report of the People Committee

The People Committee Chair advised the Board that the committee had met, for the first time since the UK general election, at the start of June. The committee noted to the Board:

- Staff morale is a concern and is a significant risk due to the uncertainty around future funding however this was monitored and well managed by the Leadership Team.
- It was unclear which committee the physical security of staff sat under. The Board were informed by the CEO that this would normally sit under the ARC with the Programme Lead reporting to the committee to provide assurance alongside the internal audit function.

ACTION – The CEO and ARC chair to provide assurance to the People committee that the physical security of WFD staff is being monitored.

4. In-depth review: Programme Policy & Quality

The Head of Global Thematic Programmes joined the meeting and provided an overview of the DRDW Learning paper that had been sent to the Board. The Board were advised of the three main outputs for the programme in Year 1 24/25; In-country projects, Learning/community of practice and Research/engaging in various forums and were updated on what had happened around these outputs. An update on DRDW programming for 25/26 was discussed and the Board were informed that AI had been utilised to create a podcast based on the DRDW learning paper that was interesting.

The Board thanked Charlotte for the informative presentation and asked that the podcast link be shared.

ACTION – DRDW learning paper podcast link to be shared with the Board of Governors.

Duncan Hames provided a brief update to the Board in his capacity as Programme Lead. The Board were advised that he had joined the Quarterly programme meetings as well as being involved in the recent Learning and Knowledge Exchange (LAKE) week. It was noted that the WFD Party Political Offices (PPO's) had a secondary benefit outside of the programmes they engage in by reinforcing relationships with parties and MPs outside of those on the Board.

The Board discussed the work of the PPOs and how to raise WFDs prominence across the various parties and with the large number of new MPS since the UK general election. It was agreed that the CEO, Anthony Smith would meet with the MP representatives on the Board to agree actions on how to raise prominence across all-parties.

ACTION – CEO to meet with the MPs on the Board to agree actions to raise WFDs prominence across all parties.

4. Regional Focus: ECA

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited

Company number: 2693163

The Regional Director for ECA joined the meeting and provided an update on the current programming in the ECA region. The Board were informed that:

- Recent changes to democratic funding have resulted in the loss of two third-party grants and the reduction in the grant for the Western Balkans.
- Several programmes are experiencing a difficult in-country environment, which is impacting the work conducted.
- A reduction in the bigger democracy support organisations has opened opportunities for WFD to form a consortium to fill the gap.

The Board thanked Chris for his presentation and agreed that working with other organisations to fill the gap due to the US withdrawal would be a welcomed step forward.

Any other business

The Board agreed that October would be a suitable time to hold the Board Away day.

ACTION - The Board Secretary to liaise with the Board of Governors to set a date towards the end of October.

The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that the Office move was currently in progress with the new Office Lease, agreed by the Board by email decision last quarter, would be signed later today.

There being no other business to discuss, the Board noted that the next formal Board meeting would be held in September 2025